

NASA Lewis Research Center
Cleveland, Ohio

February 3, 1998

TO: Lewis Supervisors

FROM: 0400/Chief, Office of Human Resources

SUBJECT: Guidelines on Religious Freedom in the Federal Workplace

Please disseminate to all civil service employees within your organization.

President Clinton has issued guidelines which clarify the right of religious expression in the Federal workplace. The guide entitled "Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace" applies to all civilian executive branch agencies, officials, and employees of the Federal Government. The guidelines principally address employee's religious exercise and religious expression when the employees are acting in their personal capacity within the Federal workplace and the public does not have regular exposure to the work area.

The guidelines accomplish three things. First, they specify that Federal employees may engage in personal religious expression to the greatest extent possible, consistent with law and interests in workplace efficiency. Second, they state that Federal employers may not discriminate in employment on the basis of religion, require religious participation or nonparticipation as a condition of employment, or permit religious harassment. Third, they clarify that agencies must reasonably accommodate employees' religious practices.

Some key provisions include:

1. Agencies may not regulate employees' personal religious expression on the basis of its content or viewpoint. Agencies may, however, reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of all employee speech.
2. Agencies are not required to permit employees to use work time to pursue religious or ideological agendas.
3. Employees may engage in religious expression in work areas not regularly open to the public, as long as it does not interfere with the agency's carrying out its official responsibilities.
4. Employees may engage in religious expression with fellow employees in the same manner they engage in comparable nonreligious private expression, as long as it does not interfere with workplace efficiency.
5. Employees are permitted to attempt to persuade fellow employees of their religious views unless a fellow employee asks that it stop or otherwise demonstrates it is unwelcome.

6. Federal agencies may not discriminate against employees on the basis of their religion, religious beliefs, or views concerning religion.

7. Supervisors may not, explicitly or implicitly, insist that subordinates either participate or not participate in religious activities. However, this prohibition in no way restricts supervisors from engaging in speech about religion as long as it is not coercive and it is understood it is his/her personal view. Supervisors should be careful to ensure that statements made and actions taken are not perceived as coercion of religious or nonreligious behavior.

8. Federal employees are protected from a hostile environment or religious harassment in the form of religiously discriminatory intimidation, or pervasive or severe religious ridicule or insult.

9. Agencies must accommodate employees' exercise of their religion unless such conduct would impose an undue hardship on the conduct of the agency's operations.

10. Supervisors and employees are prohibited from acting in a manner that would create the reasonable impression that the Government is sponsoring, endorsing, or inhibiting religion generally, or favoring or disfavoring a particular religion. Employees may also not use Government funds or resources (other than those facilities generally available to Government employees) for private religious uses.

The general principle in these guidelines is that agencies treat all employees with the same respect and consideration, regardless of their religion (or lack thereof). This same principle has been emphasized at the Center for a number of years. It is also specifically stated in the Nondiscrimination-Nonharassment Policy Statement issued by the NASA Administrator, Daniel S. Goldin. In May 1997, our Center Director, Donald J. Campbell, forwarded this policy to all Center employees and emphasized the need to treat all NASA employees with respect and dignity. As was indicated in that policy and is stressed in the newly published guidelines on religious freedom, failing to treat others with respect based on their religious beliefs, will not be tolerated.

A copy of the "Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace" is available on the Office of Human Resources Home Page at <http://www.lerc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR>. If you have questions regarding these guidelines, you may contact Ms. Lori Pietravoia, Employee Relations Officer, at PABX 3-2506.

/s/

Maury L. Blanton

Copy Distribution:

Supervisors (Secretaries cc'd) (B-1)